2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
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the society as unfit for interaction. If the population of the undivided Badaga community in 1871 was just under twenty thousand, then there has scarcely been any growth in *scale* when we consider that today this would still be about the order of people with whom a Badaga could potentially interact *within* one of the several factions which divide the current community of over a hundred thousand (cf. Appendix 2, p. 249).

Health Improvements and Economic Growth

The hazards of famine and epidemic disease which confronted Badagas in the nineteenth century have posed less of a problem in the twentieth. The young generation has never known starvation. Standards of health have much improved and public health facilities, especially mass inoculations, have decimated the earlier scourges. Even the modern practice of piping water into the villages has caused a vast improvement in health (Grigg, 1880, 185, n. 2; Hockings, 1979b, 10–15).

The development of a mixed cash-crop farming economy and slight industrialization from the time of the First World War have been crucial factors in the improvement of Badaga living conditions. While there are still many families that are landless or very poor, the opportunities for earning cash are so much wider than they were a century ago that general famine is not a severe or recurrent threat any more.

Education, too, has broadened the Badagas' view of society and is now very popular with them. As early as 1887 it was noted that they had themselves built six schools out of village funds.[20]

The community thus managed to overcome the social and economic difficulties which, if not ameliorated, have often triggered some kind of revitalization movement.[21] There was no successful revitalization among the Badagas even though several small and localized cults showed some potential. Instead the people were able to survive their period of frustration, accept the existence of a separate Christian community and shift from subsistence to a cash-crop economy that allowed them to improve their standard of living significantly even though the ratio of people to farm-land was rapidly increasing. Thus we can say that while the society is in no sense static today it has managed to

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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[615]

one bed, on which there lies a walking-stick for each dead adult, or a smaller stick for a child. In such a funeral the ritual acts and prayers are performed for each male first, and then for each female, in order of generation seniority and not of absolute age at death. If people of different phratries have died in the same hamlet then a separate bed is used for the sticks representing the members of each. Rituals are done for the superior phratry first, unless the dead members of that phratry were visitors from another hamlet. Finally, if some visitors have died there will be two separate beds for the funerals of agnates and affines within the same phratry.

164 RUBELLA (*kasare*)
[165]

7.4. *Kasare*, probably identifiable with measles, kills scarcely one in a hundred of those who do not follow the restrictions, whereas smallpox kills one in two of those who ignore the treatment procedure. Nonetheless measles should not be taken lightly: as one ironic proverb puts the matter, "Measles does not harm one; the eye is ungrateful [for what it sees]." All the rules for treating smallpox should be followed, except that an infected hamlet is not deserted. The water-sprinkling treatment, begun on the third day after the disease has been recognized by its widely scattered spots, has usually cured it by the seventh day. This is followed by the customary hot bath and inhalation of smoke (7. 2).

[539]

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758
[731]

164 PLAGUE (*ili sattara*)

7.5. Plague was not uncommon early in this century, and was known to be brought by rats (*Rattus rattus*). It is not much of a problem now however, as a medical missionary has observed:

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> [Ketti] village has been harbouring the infection of plague for the last 18 months. But although there were as many as 138 rat falls reported in one week, we only know of four humans attacked. This clearly demonstrates the value of prompt preventative measures [by Government health authorities]. Owing to this incidence of plague fewer people have been coming into Ketti from

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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task, and does not put it on again till she has bathed herself at the end of the pollution period.

Today each cluster of villages (i.e. Panchayat Board) has one trained nurse and two or three midwives appointed by the State Government. The later are just experienced Badaga midwives with no formal training who happen to have been recommended for the position.

Exorcists and Shaman s

10.7. Badaga exorcists are always male, and are very few in number. As often as not Badagas' ghosts have to be exorcized by non-Badaga exorcists. These men may also have lesser therapeutic skills, such as making talismans to ward off fevers and evil influences from the children who wear them. The idiosyncratic nature of exorcism is sufficiently indicated by the examples in Chapter 8 and calls for no further elaboration here.

The most feared *mantrava:dis* (shamans) in the Nilgiris were members of the Kurumba tribe, one of whom might be "called in on all occasions of blight and murrain to propitiate or scare the demon of disease"—if such there be (Breeks 1873: 53). Though this may still occasionally happen, I find no record of Kurumbas acting as exorcists to the Badagas, even though they did offer much supernatural protection to them from the sorcery of other malicious Kurumbas ; and they do sometimes try to cure the sick. Thus, "In 1891, the inmates of a single Kurumba but were said to have been murdered, and the hut burnt to ashes, because one of the family had been treating a sick Badaga child, and failed to cure it.... Again, in 1900, a whole family of Kurumbas were murdered, of which the head, who had a reputation as a medicine man, was believed to have brought disease and death into a Badaga village." (Thurston 1912: 233-34 ; also 1909 : 86). The Badagas were never so brutal with their own therapists, but the latter never seemed to be holding the threat of sorcery over the heads of their fellows. The worst that an unpopular therapist might have to suffer would be the mockery of an appropriate proverb; for instance, "He has healed others, but cannot cure himself" (Metz 1864 :95), or "It is half bad if you do something [wrong] when you know about it; entirely bad if you do it when you are ignorant."